

Department of Rail and Public Transportation
(DRPT)
Comments To
Disability Commission
November 15, 2004

The Public Transportation Division of DRPT administers and manages state and federal grant programs, conducts performance evaluations, provides technical assistance and works to improve transit ridership, sharing operations and alternative commute options throughout the Commonwealth.

The Public Transportation Division manages urban state funds that support operations for WMATA, The Richmond and Hampton Roads Areas. The Public Transportation Division also manages the rural and specialized programs for small urban population, and also rural populations, private non-profit agencies that transport the elderly and disabled, and transportation for TANF participants.

DRPT manages grants for almost 51 public transit systems. The newest system is the Town of Pulaski (Pulaski Area Transit) that began service in October of this year.

BAY TRANSIT is an example of variety services that a Virginia public transit system provides.

- Began as a Senior Transportation provider
- Became a public transit provider in 1996 by providing transportation in Gloucester County.
- Now provides public transportation for ten counties in the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck
- A 2,600 square mile service area
- Provide over 100, 000 rides this past year
- All BAY TRANSIT public transit vehicles are wheelchair accessible
- All service is Demand Response and meets ADA requirements
- Service includes transportation for TANF and other Social Service low-income provider
- Service includes transportation mental retardation employment services
- Certified Medicaid Transportation Provider

Transportation on the Federal Level

There are 62 Federal Programs that are involved in transportation for various services that have very few rules and regulations to coordinate services. Because of this President Bush signed an Executive order (attached) that promotes interagency cooperation and the establishment of appropriate mechanism to minimize duplication and overlap of federal programs and services so that the transportation disadvantage have access to more transportation services.

The Federal Government has launched the UNITED WE RIDE PROGRAM to promote coordinated transportation services

The goals of the program are following:

To develop an education plan for coordinated human service transportation resulting in enhanced customer access at the local level for individuals with disabilities; older adults; and individuals with lower incomes.

To simplify access to transportation services and to enhance customer service through the development of a comprehensive and coordinated transportation system.

To reduce restrictive and duplicative laws, regulations, and programs related to human service transportation at the Federal level.

To ensure comprehensive planning for the coordination of human service transportation for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with lower incomes.

To standardize cost allocation processes.

To document successful strategies in coordinating human service transportation at the Federal, State, Tribal, and Local levels.

THE UNITED WE RIDE Program will initiate the following:

- Framework for action
- State leadership awards
- National leadership forums
- State coordination grants
- Technical Assistance programs

In Virginia, in concert with the UNITED WE RIDE, DRPT under the Secretary of transportation and agencies under the Secretary of Health and Human Resources have organized a State Agency Interagency Human Service Transportation Task Committee. The agencies participating on this committee are :

- Department for the Aging
- Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
- Department of Medical Assistance Services
- Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services
- Department of Rehabilitative Services
- Department of Social Services
- Virginia Board for People with Disabilities
- Department of Rail and Public Transportation

The objectives of the Committee are to :

- Increase awareness of transportation needs
- Establish baseline data regarding transportation services
- Develop and implement a joint plan to provide ongoing technical assistance
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders at the national, state and local levels
- To identify barriers and solutions to accessing transportation services
- Work together to better coordinate and the provision of funding opportunities

This committee has applied for a Federal UNITED WE RIDE GRANT for \$35,000. The Committee primary goal is to develop Virginia's Action Plan for Coordinating Human Service Transportation. Based upon the lack of accurate information on Virginia's intense human community service needs in transportation, the VA Interagency Transportation Committee determined Virginia must first establish a clear and objective baseline of the Commonwealth's human service transportation resources and unmet needs. The Committee, therefore, determined that Virginia's proposal should be focused on conducting an accurate and complete inventory of the state's human service transportation system.

Project Description

All state agencies will notify their transportation provider network of their responsibility to complete the survey. The survey will be submitted on-line over the Internet. The following information will be requested.

Vehicle Inventory

- Number of vehicles by mode (cars, minivans, wheelchair vans);
- Seating capacity of each vehicle;
- Age, manufacturer and model, mileage and condition of each vehicle;
- Ownership status – (leased or owned);
- Accessibility status – (lift, ramp, number of wheelchair position); and
- Communications equipment (radio etc).

Vehicle Utilization

- Hours of use
- Days of use
- Geographic area served (origins/destinations/routes)

Ridership

- Eligibility Criteria
- Number of annual passengers, service hours, and service miles
- Type of service provided (demand response, subscription, fixed route)

Transportation Cost and Revenue Data

- Vehicle operating costs
- Funding sources and amounts

Collaboration Tools

- Software used when sharing vehicles (currently used or wish list)
- Collaborative Billing models (currently used or wish list)
- Ground rules/ Protocols when collaborating (currently used or wish list)

Survey Results and Use

VA Human Service Transportation Inventory is expected to yield the following critical information at the city and county level, which can be made available from the survey to complete the state human services transportation plan and will help the committee begin the strategic VA Collaborated Transportation Action Plan for the next decade:

1. The existence of idle vehicles of excess down time;
2. The availability of unused capacity on vehicles being operated;
3. The potential for current transportation providers to purchase service from a coordinated system at a lower rate;
4. Unmet agency transportation needs; and
5. Tools for collaboration.
6. Consumer Information – The Commonwealth will create an information system to show the availability of human service transportation systems

Consumer Involvement and Outcomes

In addition to the involvement of consumers in forming the questions of the inventory, the results of the Virginia's Human Services Transportation Inventory will be aggregated and reported resource information for consumers regarding services available. Through a public comment process consumers will report to the state what type of services are still needed.

